IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE ROAD MAP FOR SUCCESS

Executive Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Change is probably the first and foremost management issue of today. It's going to happen, with or without us. It represents growth, opportunity and innovation on one hand; and intimidation, skepticism, distrust, disruption and anxiety on the other. If change is to going to be effective and successful, it must have competent leadership with vision.

The problem is, although the Wilson Fire and Rescue Services is trying to increase its focus on fire prevention activities, the prevailing attitude among the operations division continues to be "suppression minded". As efforts are made to be more proactive in fire prevention, a suppression focus from the majority of the department prevents an organizational change.

The purpose of this project was to measure, the level of commitment from the operations division toward their involvement with fire prevention activities, and provide the necessary information that would allow the leadership team to successfully plan, lead and institutionalize this organizational change among the department's suppression forces.

The study uses a combination of evaluative and descriptive research methodology. The questions to be answered were:

1. What path should the leadership team follow to positively lead the Operations Division through an organizational change?
2. What factors must the leadership team consider in order to make this organizational change successful?
3. What obstacles are likely to confront the leadership team while trying to change the organization's traditional culture?

The procedures included an extensive literature review to gather sufficient information on organizational culture, which would aid the leadership with it's efforts in trying to change the cultural thinking of the operations division regarding fire prevention activities. The exploration was also conducted to provide help in understanding people's reactions to change, in planning, developing, implementing and monitoring change. An inter-department survey was conducted among personnel in the operations division to measure their culture as it relates to fire prevention activities at all ranks.

The purpose of the survey was to decipher the department's organizational culture regarding fire prevention activities i.e., engine company inspections. It would also provide the leadership team with some sort of understanding of what we were facing in trying to manage a change in culture.

The results of this research project provided a clear path of direction for the leadership team to follow when trying to implement change. Factors that need to be considered when analyzing the problem and planning the change process were outlined to assist the leadership team in their efforts. Common stumbling blocks that tend to hinder change along with frequent errors made by leaders attempting change were outlined. A change model was provided to guide leaders through the change process in a logical systematic method. The survey concluded that the majority of the operations division agreed that they should become more involved with fire prevention activities; however, they did not agree with the decision to do engine company inspections.

The recommendations provided measures to assist the leadership team in successfully salvaging the change process already underway, while at the same time, easing some of the current anxiety associated with the change, without jeopardizing the department's new vision.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

Abstract.. 1

Table of Contents.. 3

Introduction.. 4

Background and Significance.. 5

Literature Review.. 7

Procedures.. 19

Results.. 20

Discussion.. 28

Recommendations.. 31

References.. 34

Appendix A.. 36

Appendix B.. 37

INTRODUCTION

For too long now, the fire service's mission has been focused on helping the pubic from a reactionary standpoint. In 1992, the Wilson Fire and Rescue Services started trying to become more proactive, with the public, instead of reactionary. The department wanted to become more involved with its fire prevention efforts. Line officer job descriptions were rewritten to require fire inspector certification and since that time, a Life Safety Educator has been hired. The department's leadership team felt it was time to get the operations division more involved in its fire prevention efforts.

Although the Wilson Fire and Rescue Services is trying to increase its focus on fire prevention activities, the prevailing attitude among the operations division continues to be "suppression minded". As efforts are made to be more proactive in fire prevention, a suppression focus from the majority of the department prevents an organizational change. This lack of commitment reduces our ability to provide the citizens all they deserve and need in order to make our city a safer community.

The purpose of this project was to measure the level of commitment from the operations division toward their involvement with fire prevention activities, and to provide the necessary information that would allow the leadership team to successfully plan, lead and institutionalize this organizational change among the department's suppression forces.

The study uses a combination of evaluative and descriptive research methodology. The questions to be answered were:

1. What path should the leadership team follow to positively lead the Operations Division through an organizational change?
2. What factors must the leadership team consider in order to make this organizational change successful?

3. What obstacles are likely to confront the leadership team while trying to change the organization's traditional culture?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The state of North Carolina implemented a mandatory fire code in July of 1991. Under this code, all fire inspections done in North Carolina for the purpose of code enforcement had to be done by certified fire inspectors.

The Wilson Fire and Rescue Services went through a reorganization in 1993. The final results of this process required all fire prevention personnel to become state certified level III fire inspectors, captains had to become level II certified, lieutenants and engineers had to be certified as level I inspectors. The purpose behind these requirements was the department's plan to initiate engine company inspections. At this time, we had four fire inspector positions.

One year later our department went through a job reclassification study due to the modification of job requirements. As a result of this study, all personnel who were required to be a certified fire inspector received a significant pay adjustment. Time frames were established for affected personnel to achieve their required certification. They ranged from six to eighteen months. A large, yet undetermined number of employees did not meet the initial dead line. At the date of this project, some five years later, there were still a number of people who had not met the requirements outlined in their job change.

In 1994, the City of Wilson underwent council mandated personnel cutbacks. These reductions forced the Wilson Fire and Rescue Services to lose seven positions, one of which was a fire inspector. This left the department with three inspectors.

In 1998, OSHA's 2in/2out rule went into affect. This federal ruling required the use of rapid intervention teams on structural fires. The overall implications of the standard required more personnel to be on the fire scene before fire attack operations could begin. For the Wilson Fire and Rescue Services, this meant reassigning two of the three remaining fire inspectors to the operations division in an effort to achieve compliance with the OSHA standard.

The department utilized off duty captains to help maintain compliance with the mandatory inspection schedule. This measure was having a negative impact on the department's overtime budget. Something else had to be done to help get the inspections done. The department's leadership team felt it had to develop and implement an engine company inspection program. This would not be a popular decision, there would be opposition. The leadership needed to understand the reason for this opposition, so they could come up with a plan to effectively implement the change.

This research project directly relates to the subject matter covered in the *Executive Leadership Course*. Our leadership team had to identify the organizational culture of the operations division as it related to fire prevention. The basic beliefs and values had to be measured, if we were going to be successful in implementing the desired change. The course emphasized the need to understand the elements associated with organizational culture and a managed approach toward change.

This research project is a valuable tool for the Wilson Fire/Rescue Services. It provides valuable information in helping the leadership team understand, the need to adapt and change our organization is not readily apparent to many of the people who work for us. It also provides the necessary model for change and maps the steps to successful transition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review was performed to identify existing research on Organizational Culture and how to effectively implement a cultural change within an organization. The material for this literature review came from the National Fire Academy Learning Resource Center, local community college and public library. Several resources were only available through inter library loan.

Many formal definitions for organization culture have been written. Edgar H. Schein declares organizational culture as "the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 1984, p. 3). Humans have a need for order and consistency. Assumptions become patterned into what Schein terms as "cultural paradigms". "A cultural paradigm is a set of interrelated assumptions that form a coherent pattern" (Schein, 1984, p. 4). The function of culture is to stabilize the internal and external environment for the organization. The culture of an organization must be perceived as correct and valid if it is to serve its function. For an organization's culture to continue, it must be taught to new members. "One of the most important areas of culture is the shared consensus on who is in, who is out, and by what criteria one determines membership" (Schein, 1984, p. 11). Culture covers human functioning and is always in a change process. If culture paints a picture of an organization's paradigm, that is how their world is, then obviously it will be passed on to new members. Schein believes the process of passing on culture "provides an opportunity for testing, ratifying, and reaffirming it. For both of these reasons, the process of socialization (i.e., the passing on of the group's culture) is strategically an important process to study if one wants to decipher what the culture is and how it might change" (Schein, 1984, p. 12).

If our culture is to have a usefulness within the organization, it should draw us to our human need for stability, consistency, and meaning. Our cultural development by formalization should be, "a striving toward patterning and integration, even though the actual history of experiences of many groups prevents them from ever achieving a clear-cut paradigm" (Schein, 1992, p. 11).

Trying to change the basic beliefs and assumptions of an organization is a very difficult job. It requires a great deal of time and creates a lot of anxiety. Schein believes the key issue for leaders is to be able to reach the deep seated levels of the organization's culture. The leader must be able to appraise the functionality of the assumptions made at every level and how to cope with the anxiety released at those levels (Schein, 1992, p. 27).

Culture comes from three sources: the organization's beliefs, values, and assumptions of the organization's founders; the members educational experiences as the organization unfolds; and what new members and new leaders bring to the organization in the form of beliefs, values and assumptions. The founders have the greatest impact on the cultural beginning (Schein, 1992, p. 211). If one is trying to accomplish change that is considered more than minor to the core structure, the overall system must first face disequilibrium great enough to force a coping process that carries one beyond reinforcing current assumptions. "The creation of such a disequilibrium is called unfreezing, or creating a motivation to change" (Schein, 1992, p. 298). Schein also reveals the unfreezing process is essential. It is comprised of three separate processes: (1) enough disconfirming data to cause serious discomfort and disequilibrium; (2) the connection of the disconfirming data to important goals and ideals causing anxiety and/guilt; and (3) enough psychological safety, in the sense of seeing a possibility of solving the problem without loss of identity or integrity, thereby allowing members of the organization to admit the disconfirming data rather than defensively denying it (Schein, 1992, p. 299). All three must be in existence in order to create a motivation to change. Information that may indicate the organizational goals are not being met or that some of the processes are failing is know as disconfirming data.

Sometimes this disconfirming data may be a known item of existence; but because of fear and a deficiency in “psychological safety”, this knowledge is suppressed or denied.

> “The essence of psychological safety is that we can imagine a needed change without feeling a loss of integrity or identity. If the change I have to make threatens my whole self, I will deny the data and the need for change. Only if I can feel that I will retain my identity or my integrity as I learn something new or make a change, will I be able to even contemplate it” (Schein, 1992, p. 300).

After the unfreezing, the organization follows the change process down many different avenues. These avenues reflect a trail and error learning process based on a broad examination of the environment or imitation of role models (Schein, 1992, p. 301). Refreezing is the final element in the change process. It refers to the needfulness to reinforce any new behavior and insight in an effort to produce confirming data again (Schein, 1992, p. 302). Schein (1992) reveals that “all change occurs through the mechanisms of disconfirmation, the creation of guilt or anxiety, and the creation of psychological safety. When those three factors are in appropriate balance the system is unfrozen and becomes motivated to change. Change then occurs through cognitive redefinition of key concepts and the resulting behavioral changes become refrozen in the personalities of the individuals and in the norms and routines of the group” (p. 312).

A new paradigm of Organizational theory is entitled organizational culture perspective. “It asserts that organizational culture is the unseen and unobservable force that is always behind activities that can be seen and observed” (Cook, 1990, p. 86). The culture contains many things one can’t see. Instituting change without knowledge of the organization’s values, beliefs and individual behaviors is impossible. Many may believe that changing the superficial, (artifacts, symbols, rituals) changes the culture . In order for change to be successful it must be incorporated into the value system of the culture. “Real change can only occur if the leader successfully unfreezes the old assumptions and replaces them with new assumptions and then refreezes them into the subconscious of the culture” (Cook, 1990, p. 92). A leaders vision and dedication is the key to successful change.

When embarking on change, we have a tremendous challenge to persuade our people to embrace the change, or at least not fight it. There must be an extensive educational and communications campaign from start to finish. The organizations that have the greatest success rate in selling change to employees are the ones with the clearest messages about the need for change (Hammer & Champy, 1993, p.148). Two key messages must be effectively communicated to the employees. The first communicates where the organization is and why it can’t stay here and the second describes what the organization needs to become (Hammer & Champy, 1993, p. 149).

Vision refers to a picture of the future. A good vision in a change process serves three important purposes. First, it clarifies the general direction for change. Second, people are motivated to take action in the right direction even though the first steps may be painful. Thirdly, it helps to coordinate peoples actions (Kotter, 1996, p. 68). “Clarifying the direction of change is important because, more often than not, people disagree on direction, or are confused, or wonder whether significant change is really necessary” (Kotter, 1993, p. 69).

To be an effective leader, one must create the vision for the organization. Once created, the people must embrace the vision as if it were their own creation. It is only then will people fully accept their role and responsibility to achieve it. “The only way to translate vision and alignment into people’s day-to-day behavior is by grounding these lofty concepts in the company’s day-to-day environment” (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1985, p. 27).

More and more, Fire service managers today are being asked to adjust to new expectations. The pressure comes from both internal and external influences. “Where departments tend to get into trouble when dealing with a profession in transition is by not apprising all of the members of the profession of why the changes are occurring. Often, executives won’t clearly communicate the pressures on them as policy decision makers, thus making it hard for middle managers to effectively manage day-to-day operations” (Vonada & Pearlman, 1990, p. 44). While some managers exert an eagerness and high level of energy to deal with cultural change, others resist and exhibit great fear. Vonada and Pearlman take the position that “ misery is truly optional when dealing with and managing through transition” (Vonada & Pearlman, 1990, p.45). Understanding that change will come no matter how prepared we are is the key to handling the pain associated with cultural change. Managers promoted from within the organization many times trust the feelings of employees rather than concentrating on how they can assist them with the certainty of change. “The success of a fire department, and of the professional individuals within it, will be affected by their ability to recognize and manage this cultural change” (Vonada & Pearlman, 1990, p. 46).

The Department of Social Science and Policy Studies and the Center for Firesafety Studies at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Worcester, Massachusetts conducted a survey of the 48 contiguous states. The participates were “high-ranking fire officials” from the 166 U.S. cities exceeding 100,000 in population. Three copies of the survey went to each department. They were asked to be given to those considered “influential”, including the chief (Doerschler, 1989, p.19). The intent of the survey was to measure how much fire officials expected major changes for the fire service in the near future, the direction the changes would or should take, and how the fire service may be reshaped in the mist of changing times. “The position of a respondent within a department seemed to play the most important role in determining receptivity to changes in the role of the fire service. Fire Marshals and other high-level administrative personnel (such as chiefs or assistant chiefs) seemed the most receptive overall to major role changes for the fire service. Conversely, line officers in fire suppression and fire prevention divisions tended to express a greater degree of concern over maintaining the department's suppression forces" (Doerschler, 1989, p. 21).

Tehome believes seedplanting and transplanting are the two basic methods of organizational change used by successful change officers. Long term, the most effective is seedplanting; however, transplanting is quicker and more effective. The most risky is seedplanting because in some cases germination may not occur until the second year. In some cases the seeds may rot and never grow. "Transplanting is more labor-intensive and requires more detailed planning than seedplanting, but its results are immediately measurable. The department change officer will find occasions to employ both change techniques (Tehome, 1991, p. 92).

Strategies for change, initiated inside the organization, sometimes will clash with the culture. When this happens the culture will always win. "If the organizational culture does not embrace your initiative related to the change, the overall change efforts will struggle and often fail" (Bruegman, 1998, p. 3). If a leader is to be successful in implementing cultural change, some basic requirements must be followed. Top management must be committed and involved in the process. There has to be a mechanism for measuring the change on a day-to-day level and from the big picture prospective. Strenuous goals persuading the organization to be the best must be created. They must be educated as to how and why the changes are necessitated (Bruegman, 1998, p. 4).

"Leading cultural change really comes down to addressing four key organizational questions:

- Information - What is the change?

- Inspiration - Why is that necessary?
- Implementation - How will it be done, both individually and organizationally?
- Institutionalization - When will we know when it is a success?

> If we can cover those four aspects of cultural change, we'll be able to move through that four-step transition process of denial, resistance, exploration, and finally, organizational commitment" (Bruegman, 1998, p. 5).

We must keep in mind that everybody in our organization is not going to comprehend the need to change the organization (Bruegman, 1998, p. 6).

Modifying an organizations culture is a tough job. Although it is a complex task, it can be done with the right leadership. The leader must have vision and be realistic concerning strategies used to enhance the performance of the organization.

> "The single most visible factor that distinguishes major cultural changes that succeed from those that fail is competent leadership at the top. The leader creates a team that can establish a new vision and set strategies for achieving that vision. The leader succeeds in persuading important groups and individuals in the organization to commit themselves to that new direction and then energize the personnel sufficiently to make it happen, despite all the obstacles" (Tunstall, 1997, p. 11).

If a leader is planning a "major culture change" he must have an "outsider's openness to new ideas and an insider's power base" (Tunstall, 1997, p. 15). The leader must be able to sell the need for change even when the majority are satisfied. The new vision must be effectively communicated and tactics to overcome any barriers to change must be developed (Tunstall, 1997, p. 15).

Organizations today face a major task in adapting to change. This change requires a great deal of flexibility, innovation, and quick responsiveness. "Change can just happen or it can be planned. Change that is managed is change that we call planned" (Robbins, 1983, p. 265). Keeping an organization current and viable is the overall objective of planned change. Organizations are dependent on their environments. Knowing the environment does not stand still, the organization must develop strategies to facilitate planned change (Robbins, 1883, p. 265). People in organizations resist change because they visualize change as a threat to their self-interests. Older people have a greater tendency than the young to resist change. This is due to having a greater investment and more to lose by having to adjust to the change (Robbins, 1883, p. 267). Robbins believes that "successful change requires unfreezing the status quo, changing to a new state, and refreezing the new change to make it permanent" (Robbins, 1983, p. 274). "The status quo can be considered an equilibrium state. To move from this equilibrium–unfreezing is necessary" (Robbins, 1983, p. 275). Change can be implemented once the unfreezing has occurred.

A notable amount of change that takes place must occur in our organization's basic beliefs, in our very culture. "We can make significant changes in our processes, procedures, and priorities; however, without a corresponding cultural change the functional changes will be short lived and without commitment" (Mihelic, 1995, p. 4).

William Bridges indicates that changes are not what does one in, it's transitions. "Change is situational: the new site, the new boss, the new team roles, the new policy. Transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation. Change is external, transition is internal" (Bridges, 1991, p. 3). Change will not work unless transition takes place. Transition begins by letting go of something; realizing this is the first step in the task of transition management. The next step is the neutral zone. The neutral zone is known as the "no-man's-land" situated between the old reality and the new. "When you moved to your new house, or got the promotion, or had the baby, the change probably happened pretty fast. But that is just the external situational change. Inwardly, the psychological transition happened much more slowly, because instead of becoming a new person as fast as you changed outwardly, you actually struggled for a time in a state that was neither the old nor the new. It was a kind of emotional wilderness, a time when it wasn't clear who you were or what was real" (Bridges, 1991, p. 5). One could conclude that something is wrong with them for feeling this way. Some people become frightened in this zone and try to escape. This is why during major organizational changes there is often an increased level of turn over. "People make the new beginning only if they have first made and ending and spent some time in the neutral zone. Yet most organizations try to start with the beginning rather than finishing with it. They pay no attention to endings. They do not acknowledge the existence of the neutral zone, then wonder why people have so much difficulty with change" (Bridges, 1991, p. 6). An organization must identify precisely what changes in behaviors and attitudes people must make in order to deal successfully with transition (Bridges, 1991, p. 14).

Caution should be taken when beseeching people to turn away from the past that you don't push them away from you or from the new direction the organization is trying to take. People are able to walk away from the past much easier if they can take a bit of it with them (Bridgers, 1991, p. 31). "The single biggest reason organizational changes fail is that no one thought about endings or planned to manage their impact on people" (Bridges, 1991, p. 32).

If organizations continue to expect improving results from our personnel, shared values should be considered. Thompson-McCaulsland (1990) states, "my personal definition of shared values is that they are the core beliefs about a company to which we can unhesitatingly give our talent and our energy" (p. 180). This can only occur with immediate and unfaltering commitment. "Without conscious shared values, we cannot expect to harness the potential of people working within the organization. There will always be some sort of holding back, a lack of total commitment" (Thompson-McCaulsland, 1990, p. 180). Shared values create an avenue to improve the organization's foundation so that change can be institutionalized versus superficial. Successful managers desire change. They know it is one of the keys to success. Some leaders sometime "confuse superficial change with the real thing. This can lead to discouragement and disillusionment, the reverse of fulfillment" (Thompson-McCaulsland 1990, p. 181).

Learning does not have to be conscious or deliberant, in fact, it may not improve one's effectiveness. Behavior changes are not necessarily always tangible.

> "Change resulting from learning need not be visibly behavioral. Learning may result in new and significant insights and awareness that dictate no behavioral change. In this sense the crucial element in learning is that the organism be consciously aware of differences and alternatives and have consciously chosen one of these alternatives. The choice may be not to reconstruct behavior but, rather, to change one's cognitive maps or understanding" (Huber, 1991, p. 89).

Organizational culture is often referred to as "corporate culture"; this is the overall culture of the organization (National Fire Academy, 1996, unit 7, p.5). Beliefs and values are the two predominate assumptions forming the culture. "Beliefs are basic assumptions about the world and how it works. Values are basic assumptions about what ideals are desirable and worth striving for" (National Fire Academy, 1996, unit 7, p. 5). These definitions don't necessarily equate to what people pronounce their beliefs and values are, but rather their actions speak much more accurately.

Successful leaders of change must exhibit certain behaviors. There must be frequent verbal communications as well as active listening. This allows the leader to diffuse peoples concerns and feelings about change. A collaborator allows others to buy into the change, providing them with a sense of ownership. A change leader must be a demonstrator of the change effects, a role model for others to see. Finally, the leader must be an educator. Everyone must be shown the purpose and reasons for change so that to ensure an understanding of the overall change (National Fire Academy, 1996, unit 1, p. 7). There is a change model (see Appendix A) that "facilitates effective change through a systematic, four-phase process: analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation/institutionalism" (National Fire Academy, 1996, unit 2, p. 3). Phase one studies the current situation for the purpose of determining those things that need to be changed. Phase two is the planning phase. This is were all the data gathered in the analysis is placed into an overall strategy to accomplish any desired change. Implementation is identified in phase three. This is were the planning strategies are exercised. The last phase is the evaluation/institutionalism. After the change has been implemented, continuous evaluation must be done to ensure the plan is working as expected (National Fire Academy, 1996, unit 2, pp. 3-16).

In summary, the literature review has provided sufficient data to help the leadership team of the Wilson Fire and Rescue Services better understand it's organization's culture. It provides insight into why people respond to change the way they do and how we can prepare our personnel to deal with it. The study also provided a model which will help our department plan, develop, implement and monitor change, during and after the transition period.

The information in this research paper will be provided to the Wilson Fire and Rescue Services leadership team to review. It should assist us in being successful in our future attempts to implement change within our organization.

PROCEDURES

Several procedures were executed in order to obtain accurate information to answer the questions outlined in this research. An extensive literature examination was conducted to gather sufficient information on organizational culture, which would aid the Wilson Fire and Rescue Services with it's efforts in trying to change the cultural thinking of the operations division regarding fire prevention activities. The exploration was also conducted to provide help in understanding people's reactions to change, to assist in planning, developing, implementing and monitoring change.

A survey was conducted among personnel in the operations division to measure their culture as it relates to fire prevention activities at all ranks. The purpose of this survey was to decipher the Wilson Fire/Rescue Service's organizational culture regarding fire prevention activities i.e., engine company inspections. The survey was also to provide the leadership team with some sort of understanding of what we were facing in trying to manage a change in culture. A copy of the survey questionnaire is displayed in Appendix B.

The operations division of the Wilson Fire and Rescue Services is comprised of 70 personnel. Sixty one (61) of these employees were given a survey form with an explanation of its purpose. This was accomplished by meeting with engine companies when they were attending training sessions at fire station one. Anonymity was stressed in an effort to achieve a high return of surveys.

The sixty one (61) participates consisted of fifteen (15) captains, three (3) lieutenants, thirty one (31) engineers and twelve (12) firefighters. Nine (9) personnel were not available due to vacation, sick leave, or educational leave at the time the survey was given. This represents eighty seven percent (87%) of the operations division asked to participate in the survey. Personnel were asked to return the surveys by inter-office mail or facsimile. Of the total populous surveyed, ninety two percent (92%) returned a completed survey.

LIMITATIONS

Because the survey requested the rank on each respondent, one may question true anonymity. Some of the respondents returned the survey in short order. It is assumed the participates responded to the survey honestly. The unavailability of some personnel due to leave time and the absence of those surveys not returned does not reflect a total picture of the operations division.

RESULTS

This section will provide answers to the original research questions along with a narrative description of the study's findings.

1. What path should the leadership team follow to positively lead the Operations Division through an organizational change?

From the literature reviewed, several points are outlined for mapping a path toward a successful organizational change. There must be a vision for the organization. The new vision must be effectively communicated and tactics to overcome any barriers to change must be developed (Tunstall, 1997, p. 15). Two key messages must be effectively communicated to the employees. The first communicates where the organization is and why it can't stay where it's at, and the second describes what the organization needs to become (Hammer & Champy, 1993, p. 149). The members of the organization must be made to feel as if the vision were their own creation. In addition to members being told why there is a need to change, they need to understand where the pressure for the change is coming from.

The change must be incorporated into the value system of the culture. Effective change will occur only after the old assumptions are unfrozen and the new is refrozen into the subconscious of the culture (Cook, 1990, p. 92). The most defined approach to foster a successful change is to follow the four phased process for change: analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation/institutionalism (National Fire Academy, 1996, unit 2, p. 3). Frequent verbal communications as well as active listening must accompany the use of the change model.

2. What factors must the leadership consider in order to make this organizational change successful?

Instituting change without knowledge of the organizations values, beliefs and individual behaviors is impossible (Cook, 1990, p. 92). Trying to change the basic beliefs and assumptions of an organization is a very difficult job. It requires a great deal of time and creates a lot of anxiety. Any notable amount of change must occur in our organization's basic beliefs, in our very culture. "We can make significant changes in our processes, procedures, and priorities; however, without a corresponding cultural change the functional changes will be short lived and without commitment" (Mihelic, 1995, p. 4).

The function of the culture is to stabilize the internal and external environment for the organization. However, the organization must perceive the culture as correct and valid if it is to serve its function. Leaders have to remember, people must embrace the vision as if it were their own creation . It is only then will they fully accept their role and responsibility to achieve it (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1985, p. 27). "Without conscious shared values, we cannot expect to harness the potential of people working within the organization. There will always be some sort of holding back, a lack of total commitment" (Thompson-McCaulsland, 1990, p. 180). We must also keep in mind that everybody in our organization is not going to comprehend the need to change the organization (Bruegman, 1998, p. 6).

The culture must be taught to new members. Schein believes the process of passing on culture "provides an opportunity for testing, ratifying, and reaffirming it" (Schein, 1984, p. 12).

The organizations that have the greatest success in selling change are the ones with the clearest messages about the need for change (Hammer & Champy, 1993, p.148). If leaders are to be successful in implementing cultural change, top management must be committed and involved in the process. "The success of a fire department , and of the professional individuals within it, will be affected by their ability to recognize and manage this cultural change" (Vonada & Pearlman, 1990, p. 46). One of the greatest reasons organizational changes flop is the failure to manage the impact they have on their people (Bridges, 1991, p. 32).

William Bridges indicates that changes are not what does one in, it's transitions. That place one gets after leaving the old but has not yet grasped the new. It's known as the neutral zone or "no man's land". Many people become frightened in this zone and try to escape. This is why many people leave the organization when undergoing major changes. Many leaders make a serious error of judgment when they fail to acknowledge the existence of the neutral zone (Bridges, 1991, p. 6).

3. What obstacles are likely to confront the leadership team while trying to change the organization's traditional culture?

Humans tend to resist change. They have a need for order and consistency. When embarking on change, we have a tremendous challenge to persuade our people to embrace the change, or at least not fight it (Hammer & Champy, 1993, p. 148). Departments get into trouble by not apprising all of the members as to why changes are occurring (Vonada & Pearlman, 1990, p. 44). People will tend to disagree on direction, become confused, or wonder whether the change is really necessary if leadership does not do a good job of clarifying the direction of change (Kotter, 1993, p.69).

Another obstacle many mangers have to hurdle is, many times they trust the feelings of employees rather than concentrating on how they can assist them with the certainty of change. Generally line officers in fire suppression tend to express a greater degree of concern over maintaining the department's suppression forces (Doerschler, 1989, p. 21).

People in organizations resist change because they visualize change as a threat to their self-interests. Older people have a greater tendency than the young to resist change (Robbins, 1983, p. 274). Trying to change the basic beliefs and assumptions of an organization creates a lot of anxiety. If the change one has to make threatens their whole self, they will deny the need for change (Schein, 1992, p. 27).

Survey

A survey was conducted of the Wilson Fire and Rescue Services Operations personnel to decipher the organizational culture regarding fire prevention activities i.e., engine company inspections.

The survey first asked the employee to reveal their specific rank. The purpose was to measure the culture at each employee level, officer and non officer, and also the department as a whole.

The second question revealed, 26.3% of the non-officers (firefighters and engineers) strongly agreed that fire suppression forces should focus more on fire prevention activities than in the past. 39.5% agreed, 26.3% disagreed and 7.9% strongly disagreed. Of the officers (captains and lieutenants), 6.6% strongly agreed that fire suppression should focus more on fire prevention than in the past. 66.7% agreed, and 26.7% disagreed. When tallied as the whole department, 20.8% strongly agreed, 47.2% agreed, 26.4 disagreed and 5.6% strongly disagreed.

Table 1

Percentage who believe fire suppression should focus more on fire prevention activities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	StronglyDisagree
Non Officers	26.3	35.9	26.3	7.9
Officers	6.6	66.7	26.7	0
Departments	20.8	47.2	26.4	5.6

The third question revealed, 7.9% of the non-officers strongly agreed that engine companies should play an active role in code enforcement by doing engine company inspections. 18.4% agreed, 52.6% disagreed and 21.1% strongly disagreed. Of the officers, 46.7% agreed, 33.3% disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed. When tallied as the whole department, 5.6% strongly agreed, 26.4% agreed, 47.2% disagreed and 20.8% strongly disagreed.

Table 2

Percentage who believe engine companies should play an active role in code enforcement by doing engine company inspections.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Non Officers	7.9	18.4	52.6	21.1
Officers	0	46.7	33.3	20
Departments	5.6	26.4	47.2	20.8

The fourth question revealed, 5.3% of the non-officers strongly agreed that doing company inspections would have a positive impact on our department's code enforcement/fire prevention's efforts. 29% agreed, 50% disagreed and 15.7% strongly disagreed. Of the officers, 60% agreed and 40% disagreed. When tallied as the whole department, 3.8% strongly agreed, 37.7% agreed, 47.2% disagreed and 11.3% strongly disagreed.

Table 3

Percentage who believe company inspections will have a positive impact on our department's code enforcement/fire prevention efforts.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Non Officers	5.3	29	50	15.7
Officers	0	60	40	0
Departments	3.8	37.7	47.2	11.3

The fifth question revealed, 5.3% of the non-officers strongly agreed that our department's commitment to implement engine company inspections is a positive step toward achieving our organization's mission. 23.7% agreed, 55.3% disagreed and 15.7% strongly disagreed. Of the officers, 53.3% agreed, 40% disagreed and 6.7% strongly disagreed. When tallied as the whole department, 3.8% strongly agreed, 32% agreed, 51% disagreed and 13.2% strongly disagreed.

Table 4

Percentage who believe department's commitment to implement engine company inspections is a positive step toward achieving our organization's mission.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Non Officers	5.3	23.7	55.3	15.7
Officers	0	53.3	40	6.7
Departments	3.8	32	51	13.2

The sixth question revealed, 5.3% of the non-officers strongly agreed that our department's commitment to implement engine company inspections is a positive step toward achieving a safer community. 28.9% agreed, 57.9% disagreed and 7.9% strongly disagreed. Of the officers, 60% agreed and 40% disagreed. When tallied as the whole department, 3.8% strongly agreed, 37.7% agreed, 52.8% disagreed and 5.7% strongly disagreed.

Table 5

Percentage who believe department's commitment to implement engine company inspections is a positive step toward achieving a safer community.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Non Officers	5.3	28.9	57.9	7.9
Officers	0	60	40	0
Departments	3.8	37.7	52.8	5.7

The seventh question revealed, 2.6% of the non-officers strongly agreed with our department's decision to become more actively involved in its fire prevention efforts by initiating an engine company inspection program. 21.1% agreed, 52.6% disagreed and 23.7% strongly disagreed. Of the officers, 6.7% strongly agreed, 33.3% agreed, 53.3% disagreed and 6.7% strongly disagreed. When tallied as the whole department, 3.8% strongly agreed, 24.5% agreed, 52.8% disagreed and 18.9% strongly disagreed.

Table 6

Percentage who agree with decision to become more actively involved in its fire prevention efforts by initiating an engine company inspection program.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Non Officers	2.6	21.1	52.6	23.7
Officers	6.7	33.3	53.3	6.7
Departments	3.8	24.5	52.8	18.9

The eighth and final question revealed, 2.6% of the non-officers strongly agreed that inspections should be one of the primary engine company functions in our fire prevention efforts. 18.4% agreed, 55.3% disagreed and 23.7% strongly disagreed. Of the officers, 26.7% agreed, 46.6 disagreed and 26.7% strongly disagreed. When tallied as the whole department, 1.9% strongly agreed, 20.8% agreed, 52.8% disagreed and 24.5% strongly disagreed.

Table 7

Percentage who believe inspections should be one of the primary engine company functions in our fire prevention efforts.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Non Officers	2.6	18.4	55.3	23.7
Officers	0	26.7	46.6	26.7
Departments	1.9	20.8	52.8	24.5

DISCUSSION

The study clearly reveals and confirms that making change is a difficult task, especially cultural changes. The most important factor in making organizational changes a success is competent leadership at the top. The leader must create a team that can establish a new vision. That vision must be communicated with sincerity, developing trust and support along the way, “as if it were their own creation” (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1985, p. 27). Leadership must be patient yet consistent as it encourages and assist other organization members adjust to the changing environment. The study indicates, if culture is to serve its function, the organization must be perceived as correct and valid (Schein, 1984, p. 11). The results of the survey confirmed these points when it revealed 71.7 % of the respondents disagreed in some capacity with the department’s decision to initiate an engine company inspection program. Although, we know everyone in the organization is not going to buy into the decision or comprehend the need to change the organization (Breugman, 1998, p.6). The author feels that with the current level of buy-in, the program is going to be traveling down a rocky road, and the chance for overall cultural change, at best, is low.

Information from the literature review shows that instituting change without understanding the organizations beliefs, values and individual behaviors is impossible. Many make the mistake of believing that changing the superficial, (artifacts, symbols, rituals) changes the culture (Cook, 1990, p. 92). The survey confirms this with overwhelming lack of support for the inspection program. The decision was made to develop and start an inspection program and job requirements were outlined. There has however, as the survey revealed, been no real cultural change. The change has been only superficial. There is only a very small level of support from the group most affected by the change.

When trying to measure fire officials perception of major changes for the fire services future, “the position of a respondent within a department seemed to play the most important role in determining receptivity to changes in the role of the fire service. Line officers in fire suppression and fire prevention divisions tended to express a greater degree of concern over maintaining the department's suppression forces" (Doerschler, 1989, p.21).

The results of the survey conducted in this study parallel with those identified in the literature review. This project's survey showed that 60% of the line officers disagreed, in some capacity, with the decision to conduct engine company inspections. An even higher percentage, 73.3%, disagreed, in some capacity, that engine company inspections should be one of their primary functions.

Seedplanting and transplanting are two basic methods of organizational change used by successful change officers. Tehome (1991) believes seedplanting is the most risky because in some cases germination may not occur until the second year and in other cases the seeds may rot and never grow (p. 92). This concept was proven correct when the survey revealed the lack of department support for engine company inspections. The seed was planted when the decision was made to work toward an inspection program and new job requirements were developed. Yet, five years later, there has been only a small amount of germination.

The study indicated that "without conscious shared values, we cannot expect to harness the potential of people working within the organization. There will always be some sort of holding back, a lack of total commitment" (Thompson-McCaulsland, 1990, p. 180). Assuming this is true, and the author does agree , the survey indicates our organization will have a lot of people holding back and not giving their all to help make the engine company inspection program a success.

The research pointed out that everyone must be shown the purpose and reasons for change so that to ensure an understanding of the overall change. It also encouraged the use of a change model to help facilitate effective change (National Fire Academy, 1996, unit 1, p.7). The model advocates four phases to effective change, if you follow the model. Our department is in the third phase; however, we did not go through phase one and two. The author feels like, if the department had used the model, the outcome of the survey would have been much more positive.

It is ironic that 68% of the operations division agreed, they should become more involved in fire prevention activities; yet at the same time, 71.7% don't think they should be doing engine company inspections.

Based on the study, making an organizational change with intentions of changing values and beliefs is a tough job. The implications are clear, the leadership of the Wilson Fire/Rescue Services has got even a tougher job, if we are going to make this program work, because of mistakes initially made.

It is the authors opinion that the decision to conduct engine company inspections was premature at the time it was made. This was such a critical decision, an in-depth study should have been done prior to the decision, and once the decision was made, implementation should have followed prior to any salary adjustments. We got our cart before the horse, people have been paid for six years to do a job, they don't even think they should be doing, and still are not doing it. The author is convinced, the decision can survive and the program can be a success provided, the leadership team utilizes the information outlined in this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations concluded from this research are based on the data compiled from the research itself. It is recommended, that the leadership team work together in creating a very detailed, yet understandable message, that effectively communicates where the organization is, why it can't stay were it's at, and describes what the organization needs to become. The leadership can not only develop the plan , they must be actively involved throughout the change process.

Realizing real change will only happen after old assumptions are unfrozen, the author recommends a series of shift meetings or a department meeting to explain the new focus. During this exchange, the reasons and need to change should be explained; those affected by the change should be clearly identified; the new vision must be shared with excitement and vigor, along with reasons why, and the implementation plan must be conveyed in detail, explaining all the conditions. An extensive educational and communications campaign must accompany the implementation plan. Once the implementation plan is under way, a continuous comprehensive evaluative tool should immediately follow. Make sure everybody knows and understands what is going to take place and what the consequences will be should anyone fail to meet expectations. Once all this has occurred, the refreezing process begins to take place and through proper nurturing and guidance the new vision will be refrozen into the culture of the organization.

The current culture would not even continue if it were not passed on to new members of the organization. Therefore, it is recommended that new members be assigned to fire prevention for two weeks before they are assigned to shift. In the first week, a regimented orientation outlining the purpose and value of all fire prevention activities should be instilled in the new members. During the second week, they should accompany a fire inspector so they can see and experience the importance of inspections, how they are not only valuable to the community, but also to the engine company. This should help institutionalize the change even if some of the older members never commit. If we foster the new, the non committed will eventually come on board, quit or retire.

Because of the current mind-set toward engine company inspections, disagreement and frustration is to be expected. Remember not everyone will embrace the change. Be careful not to get distracted by employee feelings, but rather, concentrate on how you can assist them with the certainty of the change. The older employees are more likely to resist the change, because of having the greater investment and more to lose by having to adjust to the change, or by choosing not to adjust. Before the leadership team presents the program, they should have a complete understanding of who these people are. Realizing the complexity of the state's certification, the leadership may choose to make some special provision for those who will have the opportunity to leave the organization through retirement in the next few years. The author recommends, anyone planning to retire within two years should be given the opportunity not to certify at the state level. This should help eliminate a feeling of losing their identity or integrity and some of the anxiety, among the older employees. It may even help these individuals come on board and help sell the vision to the younger employees. The author also recommends that any employee who fits into this category and already has their certification, be given an extra two percent pay increase at the next appropriate time due to their willingness to comply with the initial decision. However, before these items are acted on, it is recommended that the leadership conduct further study, to ensure these two provisions would not hinder the organization in accomplishing its vision.

The final recommendation encourages the leadership team to utilize the change model located in the appendix of this project to assist them in their efforts to implement change both now and in the future. This model should also be used by any special task group established for the purpose of recommending change.

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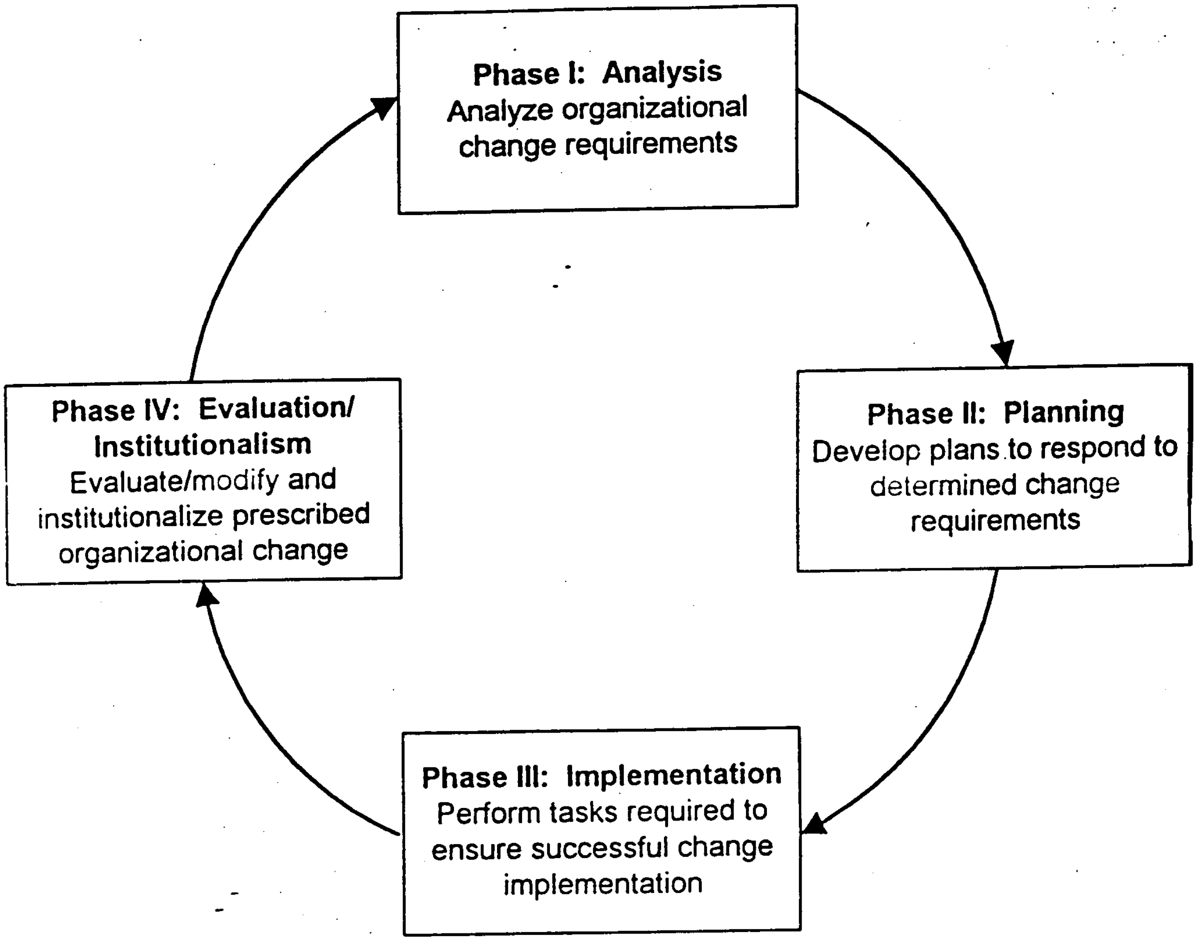
Appendix A
Change Model


Phase I: Analysis
Analyze organizational change requirements
Phase II: Planning
Develop plans to respond to determined change requirements
Phase III: Implementation
Perform tasks required to ensure successful change implementation
Phase IV: Evaluation/ Institutionalism
Evaluate/modify and institutionalize prescribed organizational change

Appendix B
Survey

EFOP RESEARCH PROJECT SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to decipher the Wilson Fire/Rescue Service's organizational culture regarding fire prevention activities i.e., engine company inspections. The results of this survey will be included in an applied research project for the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. Your response to this survey will be anonymous.

1. What's your current rank? ________________

2. Realizing that the overall fire service has changed in the past decade, do you feel fire suppression forces should focus more on fire prevention activities than in the past?

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I believe engine companies should play an active role in code enforcement by doing engine company inspections.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I believe doing company inspections will have a positive impact on our department's code enforcement / fire prevention efforts.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. I believe our department's commitment to implement engine company inspections is a positive step toward achieving our organization's mission.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. I believe our department's commitment to implement engine company inspections is a positive step toward achieving a safer community.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I agree with our department's decision to become more actively involved in its fire prevention efforts by initiating an engine company inspection program.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I believe inspections should be one of the primary engine company functions in our fire prevention efforts.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

   Additional comments:

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